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# OCCASIONAL PAPERS

## U.S. PRISON LIBRARY SERVICES AND THEIR THEORETICAL BASES

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### INTRODUCTION

This paper will attempt to uncover the theoretical bases of prison library services. The theories behind the existence of (and lack of) libraries in correctional institutions can be deduced from information on their history, their proponents, and their budgets.

The theories, or *raison d'être*, should not be confused with the potential uses or the working philosophies of correctional libraries. The first are the publicly acknowledged "whys" of libraries in penal institutions, accepted and stated outside the institution by lay society as well as by the prison personnel; the second are known usually only by those inside the institutions, by the administrators, wardens, chaplains, guards, and, of course, inmates. The distinction is a fine one, and since the theories and the practices are closely interrelated, both shall be scrutinized. The resultant problems of each theoretical system will also be mentioned. Interestingly, similar problems, especially those of security and censorship, plague each theory and philosophy.

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Although the entire topic of penal institutions is a depressing one, there does appear to be some small progress in the theories which, in turn, promote better facilities and opportunities for inmates. As will be demonstrated, the theories range from punitive to religious, through humanitarian, educational, and legalistic. The therapeutic theory of library access for inmates in penal institutions would advance library service further-- but it is as yet unaccepted.

#### PRISON LIBRARY USE

If correctional libraries went unused, if inmates were apathetic toward library access, society's ignorance of the situation could be excused and institutions' inertia understood. But proof of library use by prisoners provides rationale for their existence. Testimonials to the importance of books in prison--such as Malcolm X's statement, "A book can change a man"--are not rare. More significant than personal reports, however, are the statistics of inmate library use.

Twice the proportion of people in prison than out of prison are readers. As an inmate of Central State Hospital for the Criminally Insane in Wisconsin explained, regular "street" (outside of prison) library users continue to read while in prison in addition to the new library users, often past non-readers, who "are just now beginning to wake up to the idea of not coming back here again." It is estimated that 45 percent of Wisconsin inmates use the prison library, while 10 percent of the people on the outside use the public library.<sup>1</sup>

Kling reports that the 320 inmates in Rocky Butte County Jail account for a monthly circulation of 800-1,000 books.<sup>2</sup> The Illinois State Prison reports that inmates there read an average of six books per month.<sup>3</sup>

Souter states that most correctional institution library facilities are used by more than half the inmates despite the poor quality of the collections and conditions of the books.<sup>4</sup> Frank disagrees--he found that 75 percent of prison populations use the library.<sup>5</sup>

It has been reported that library use decreases as the size of the institution and the age of the offender increases,<sup>6</sup> and that federal institution libraries are always used to a greater extent than are the state institution libraries. Of the books circulated in the average prison, 50 to 75 percent (depending on which report is used) are fiction--probably due to the nature of the collections available and the educational level of the average inmate at the time of the studies. (Educational levels of persons convicted of felonies are currently rising.)

Despite all the discrepancies in percentages reported, and despite the fact that illiteracy among inmates is currently three times greater than among the general population,<sup>8</sup> Frank claims that inmates read five times as many books as members of the public.<sup>5</sup>

The above figures make it evident that prison libraries are used. It is, therefore, even more surprising that libraries in correctional institutions have had such a dreary history.

### PRISON LIBRARIES UNTIL 1950

The first prison constructed in the United States was built in Nantucket, Massachusetts in 1676.<sup>9</sup> The original penal institutions were aptly named--they were used to provide punitive measures. They were welcomed by a populace that wanted criminals segregated from society, although their creation was not merely for isolation. Prisons were meant to punish, and it therefore follows that prisoners were allowed no reading materials except a Bible or hymnal loaned to them by the clergy.

In 1790, the Philadelphia Prison Society began furnishing books to the inmates in the Walnut Street Jail and book service to prisoners began.<sup>10</sup> This innovation was both humanitarian and religious; the good Samaritans of the Philadelphia Prison Society hoped to help the prisoners realize their sins and properly atone for them. Accordingly, all of the literature they provided was religious in nature.

1802 marks the first library in a state prison.<sup>10</sup> The Kentucky State Reformatory established a small library, primarily of religious books, which was administered by the chaplain. Tennessee also introduced prison library service in 1829, and in 1839 nonreligious books (mainly temperance papers) were added to the collections.<sup>11</sup>

Most states' prison library service began in 1840. The collections, mainly temperance papers and religious tracts, were usually guarded by chaplains. As Engelbarts summarizes: "It is probable that practically all of the books in these libraries were theological in nature and were designed to compel prisoners to contemplate the eternal sufferings to which they would be subjected if they did not repent."<sup>12</sup> Some prisons would not even allow religious libraries--the chaplain in Sing Sing established a library in 1840 which was abolished three years later.<sup>8</sup>

1852 is an important date in the chronology of prison libraries because it marks the opening of the San Quentin (California) library.<sup>13</sup> It was one of the best and most liberal prison libraries of its time, a reputation it retains today.

In the early 1900s stock was taken of the correctional library situation. In 1903, Minnesota, which has always been a pioneer state in the development of libraries in all types of institutions, established an Institutional Library Organizer to coordinate any developments.<sup>14</sup> ALA founded a Committee on Libraries in Federal Prisons in 1911.<sup>15</sup> As of 1913 New York had libraries in seven of its thirty-three jails; all of the books in the collections were donated and the library was still serviced by the chaplain.<sup>16</sup> The New York situation was indicative of the nation's situation. Humanitarian impulses led to the donation of books which formed the collections, and

religious fervor ran the libraries. The first edition of ALA's Manual for Institution Libraries, published in 1915, introduced the notion of prison libraries as part of an institutional education program,<sup>15</sup> but this idea was largely ignored.

The depression, however, had an enormous effect on the theories of correctional institution libraries. During the years 1929 and 1930, penal institution libraries were expanded with education as their *raison d'être*.<sup>16</sup> Due to the decline in industrial demand, the inmates once kept occupied with industrial tasks became idle. Riots broke out as a result of inmates' boredom. Prison administrators decided that schooling for the prisoners was the solution--books would keep the inmates quiet. Better libraries were immediately established. San Quentin also initiated an extensive correspondence course system.

1929 was also the beginning of the federal prison library system.

But the greatest stride of all, and the one which has done more than anything else to bring the prison library before the prison people, was taken by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. When the director, Mr. Bates, and his assistant director, Mr. MacCormick, took office in the summer of 1929 one of their very first acts was to create a division of Welfare and Education and put organized libraries into each of these nineteen Federal penal institutions.<sup>17</sup>

The 1930s saw the beginning of ALA's active involvement in prison libraries.<sup>18</sup> ALA reports on correctional library service became regular entries in the professional literature.<sup>19</sup> In 1931 the ALA read with considerable interest Austin H. MacCormick's important book on prisons, The Education of Adult Prisoners, in which there was a chapter entitled "The Library As an Agency of Education." MacCormick stated that there was only one library school-trained librarian in all the penal institutions in the country.<sup>20</sup> In that same year, the first three professionally trained librarians (part-time) in the federal prisons were hired.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, MacCormick made a list of recommendations for improvements in prison library service which still have not been implemented.

By 1940, all prison libraries reflected the new theory of libraries for educational purposes becoming closely tied to the prison schools, dependent on education budgets, and administered most often by teachers and inmate assistants. In 1941, every major prison had a bookshelf labeled "the library."<sup>22</sup>

In 1941, the American Prison Association showed its first interest in prison libraries by establishing a Committee on Institutional Libraries. S.H. Souther was commissioned to do a survey which he presented at the seventy-first Annual Congress of the American Prison Association.<sup>23</sup> He discovered that half of the prison libraries which responded to a questionnaire had no automatic request for funding in the institution budget. Twenty-five percent of the state prisons responding said that inmates could read in the library;

an equal number stated that the library was serviced by the chaplain; 45 percent said that the director of education acted as librarian; and 30 percent said that inmates ran the library alone. No matter what the situation, more than half of the inmates were reported as using the library. In response to Souter's report, the Library Committee of the American Prison Association (whose name changed that year to the American Correctional Association) proposed objectives and standards for adult prisons. It recommended ten books per inmate, a full-time librarian for every 1,000-2,500 inmates, and an expenditure for the library of at least \$1.00 per inmate.

The 1942 edition of the Handbook of American Prisons and Reformatories reported nine full-time librarians in federal institutions, all of whom were responsible to the supervisor of education. The educational basis of prison libraries was here to stay. One interesting outgrowth of the educational emphasis was the practice of allowing only prisoners of a certain I.Q. to use the library. As of 1946, in Sing Sing, books such as John Gunther's Inside Latin America were loaned only to inmates with the highest I.Q.s who would ostensibly be able to learn the most from the material.<sup>24</sup>

In 1947, the California state prison system hired its first full-time professional librarian.<sup>25</sup> In four other institutions, the library was run by full-time personnel also, but by people trained as teachers or as correctional officers.

In 1949,<sup>26</sup> the American Correctional Association's Standing Committee on Institutional Libraries, which was established in 1938,<sup>27</sup> began surveying the situation and compiling booklists and handbooks. "Survey Shows Poor Libraries in Most Penal Institutions," ran the headline of a 1950 Library Journal article.<sup>28</sup> It was found that almost all state and federal institutions had some library, but few had adequate collections. The larger the institution, the poorer the collection and the more poorly trained the staff. Most collections were still sustained by donations (remnants of the humanitarian theory) and most libraries were run by the inmates.

As of 1950, prison libraries were still under the educational division of departments of corrections, or of the states. All library service was geared toward education. The punitive, religious, and humanitarian theories of prison library service had not totally disappeared, but had been superseded by the educational theory.

Before discussing trends and developments after 1950, some working philosophies of prison libraries should be noted. Interviews with prison personnel yielded several rationalizations for library service in an era that purported to offer libraries for educational purposes.<sup>29</sup> Chaplains stated that books gave prisoners hope and taught them humility and penance. Books kept inmates from brooding by raising their morales and distracting them from their problems. Wardens commented that, in addition to raising morale, books helped to lessen escape plots through preventing boredom, releasing strain, and creating gratitude (for the libraries). The importance of the library was seen as relieving the need for discipline. Therefore, despite the stated educational reason for prison libraries, the reasons and values of the library, in the

daily working philosophy of correctional personnel, ranged from religious to the all important security purposes.

Security presents the most of the problems to prison libraries. Because of the purportedly educational nature of the libraries, the collections were composed mainly of texts and other learning materials. Because of the security value imposed upon the libraries, any nonscholastic materials were carefully "screened" (i.e., censored). For example, books with explicit sexual matter, inflammatory political matter, legal references or how-to-escape suggestions were banned. Also restricted from library collections were Westerns which were seen as teaching antisocial behavior and lack of respect for law and order, and detective stories which taught ingenious ways to plan crimes. Daily newspapers were not allowed because of their excessive emphasis on crime news. Medical texts, too, were banned, supposedly so that inmates could not "swindle each other" with false information. Chemistry, photography, and photoengraving books were also forbidden because they might help a criminal perfect his methods.<sup>30</sup> The 1941 edition of Objectives and Standards for Libraries in Adult Prisons and Reformatories, by the Committee on Institutional Libraries of the American Prison Association, stated: "Books which emphasize the morbid, sex, and anti-social attitudes, ways of committing crime, disrespect for the law, religion, and government, and such types as anatomical works, federal and state laws, as well as magazines of the confessional, sensational pictorial, and pulp type should be omitted."<sup>31</sup> The philosophy was interpreted by some as stating that prisoners were like little children who must be protected (by the correctional authorities) from corrupting or confusing influences. This appears to be only a slight variation on the basic theme of the educational religious but mainly security working philosophy of prison personnel.

## THE CURRENT SITUATION

### NATIONAL

In the late 1950s and the early 1960s, a large number of small but encouraging events took place. A brief chronology should suffice to introduce them.

The Association of Hospital and Institution Libraries (AHIL) of the American Library Association was founded in 1956.<sup>32</sup>

A liberal education program, including a series of sixteen Great Books discussion groups, was held at the Federal Reformatory in El Reno, Oklahoma in 1958. The successful project was led not by librarians, but by concerned citizens who traveled to the prison from Oklahoma City.<sup>33</sup>

In 1959, Barnes found that four states had begun providing bookmobile service to penal institutions and that eight states' library associations had committees devoted to prison libraries. Unfortunately, those were the only encouraging facts he uncovered. "The prison library in most state prisons is little better than its predecessor. It suffers from lack of funds, worn out titles, unwanted titles, and untrained personnel. In the federal prisons, the libraries are better."<sup>34</sup>



During 1963, Father Gervase Brinkmar, prison chaplain, past president of the American Correctional Association and a professional librarian, made a significant speech at ALA's annual conference. His speech has been credited with leading to the subsequent ALA survey and to increased action about prison libraries by the library profession. In the same year, ALA's Standards for Library Functions at the State Level recommended a formal liaison between state libraries and institutional ones.

In 1964, the state of Maryland conducted a survey of its correctional institution libraries which led to the important national survey the next year.

The year 1965 was significant for ALA activity on the prison library problem. The national "AHIL Inventory of Libraries in State and Federally Supported Correctional Institutions" (which will be discussed later) was presented and published; AHIL met jointly with the American Correctional Association (ACA), the Correctional Education Association, and the Warden's Association of America; and AHIL prepared criteria and purchasing lists for prison libraries.

The next year, a release prepared cooperatively by ACA and ALA based on the 1965 survey statistics was used by Senator Javits of New York when he introduced Title IV of the Library Services and Construction Act to the U.S. Senate. Also in 1966, the ACA-ALA Joint Committee on Institutional Libraries was officially formed. Their purpose was:

To cooperate in the formulation and implementation of standards of library service in correctional institutions; to stimulate planning and provide guidance in the establishment and improvement of libraries in these institutions and other correctional services; to coordinate and strengthen such activities as each association now has under way; and to explore possibilities for future cooperation in carrying out the objectives held in common by both organizations. 35

Also established was the "Joint Committee on Institutional Services with AHIL" by the American Association of State Libraries "to formulate a statement of policy on the relation and responsibility of state library agencies to the correctional, remedial, custodial institutions, and hospitals of the state." 35

#### STATEWIDE

1966 was also the year of Marion Vedder's survey of the situation. She sent questionnaires to the fifty state agencies responsible for the extension of library services, asking how responsibility was divided within the state and what was being accomplished in each system. Only one state, Minnesota, reported a full-time librarian in the Department of Corrections, although nine others had part-time library consultants. The state of Washington was the only state to report official cooperation between the State Library and the correctional institution libraries of the state. Thirty-two correctional

institution libraries around the country had full-time librarians, but the majority of them were not trained professionally as librarians.

And, finally, in 1966, the ACA Manual of Correctional Standards suggested as a statement of library standards that the ALA Bill of Rights be adapted for prison libraries by adding the following preface and conclusion:

[Preface] Libraries in a correctional situation have a clear responsibility to support, broaden, and strengthen the institution's total rehabilitation program. The library should contain the free expressions of men in order to provide the individual inmate with an opportunity to study and evaluate materials in the light of his needs. The library program should provide an opportunity for education, information, and recreation.

[Conclusion] This policy statement is directed to assisting in the selection of library materials. It is designed to contribute to the development of individuals and their restoration, as creative members of society, to the community.<sup>36</sup>

Southern Illinois University did a most unusual project in 1967. The Department of Design planned an ideal prison library for "goal-oriented activity."<sup>37</sup> The design stressed "activities dealing with social reality as opposed to the suspended animation idea of 'doing time.'" As pursuing a goal "requires opportunities to explore and study the content of the goal, this opportunity is provided by the library, giving new and fresh meaning to the facility." The plan includes a basic library augmented by a facility for testing and counseling on the patron's preferences and capabilities, and a "goal orientation area" which includes a "goal finding area" and an "education and training area." Aside from these facilities, an "interchange area" for discussion and reading would be provided. The catalog, which would be analyzed by goal content, would be computerized for easy access. The model was fantastic and thought-provoking.

In the same year, the Rocky Butte Jail Library was established by the Library Association of Portland, Oregon and the enthusiastic warden. This county jail, housing 300 inmates, was given a collection of 3,000 volumes, 800-1,000 of which circulate per month. This library is the best county jail library yet established.<sup>38</sup>

At the turn of the decade, fifty-eight prison libraries in twenty-nine states had full- or part-time trained librarians. Forty-nine libraries had teachers as librarians, twenty-four used chaplains, and fifty-seven used only inmates as librarians. The collections were 1,422,580 volumes behind minimal standards in the forty-two states in Burt's survey.<sup>39</sup> She found inadequate budgets; uncataloged, unclassified, and unweeded collections; a lack of reading guidance or reference services; and poor staffing. One encouraging finding was that reading guidance of some type was found in eighty-nine prison libraries in twenty-six states and book discussion groups in thirty-two libraries in seventeen states.



In 1970, the Illinois Department of Corrections, in cooperation with the Illinois State Library and nine public library systems in the state, established a \$200,000 program for community-based library service to six adult and twelve juvenile correctional institutions in Illinois. This program was started as a direct outgrowth of a discouraging 1968 state survey of prison library service.<sup>40</sup>

1971 saw the establishment of a recreational reading library in the Allegheny County Jail. The ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table (SSRT) group in Pittsburgh organized it and built it out of eight unused cells at the request of the warden.<sup>41</sup> This and the Rocky Butte Jail collection are very important because county and city jail library service is the least developed, although 80 percent of all inmates are held for some time at local levels.

In 1972, the Berkeley, California Institute of Library Research received a \$77,000 grant from the Office of Education for an eighteen-month national study on library and information services to prison populations to "be directed toward the development of guidelines for improving services and the development of a handbook of current practices and statistical data. Plans are also being made for a demonstration library to be established in one or more correctional facilities."<sup>42</sup>

The above scanty review of national developments in the past twenty-three years makes evident a depressing fact--only three successful library programs were reported; all other projects were in the form of surveys, speeches and plans. The surveys differed little in their results despite their different dates; the committees did little but make statements; and all suggestions (e.g., state library cooperation with institutions) were virtually ignored. This history of prison library development is a testimonial to the ability to write, speak, and publish without action.

Equally depressing are the results of Gillespie's 1968 master's thesis which states that the library profession's words are not only empty, but echoes. He studied the professional library literature from 1900-1966 and found that concern by librarians for better library service to correctional institutions has almost always been a reflection of action by other groups. Librarians only follow; they do not lead in prison library reform and improvement. Since the 1950s when a big "rush" of library articles appeared in the literature, a master's thesis has been published on the topic of correctional libraries only once every six and one-half years. Also, the majority of articles are by librarians who only express short-term interest in library service to prisoners.<sup>43</sup>

## PROBLEMS

The difficulty with this topic is where to start--and where to end--because the problems are so numerous and diffuse. To begin with the prosaic, prison library service is in dire need of additional funds and materials. The 1965 AHIL survey of prison library needs, based on 294 institutions around the country, found that the nation's state prison library system has \$8.7 million--that is, more than \$1 million and more than one million books below

the minimum standards.<sup>44</sup> Staffing was even more deficient; only a quarter of the libraries have professionally trained librarians working even part-time. The federal system is purportedly better, but only 20 percent of the federal prison budget is allocated for all social services.<sup>45</sup>

A number of problems result from the above physical deficiencies. First, inmates often run the libraries, which are uncataloged. In California, over 100 inmates are used as librarians. Only one-tenth of them are paid for their work and those paid receive only two to four cents per hour. In Connecticut, prisoners not only run the prison libraries, but they produce the Union catalog for the entire state! Also resultant from lack of funds are the poor collections. One ex-offender said that, in jail, "reading is a privilege...and the material available almost seems like a punishment."<sup>45</sup> The books are old, in poor condition, and usually reflect whatever interest the donor had. Even libraries prepared especially for prisons are often based on faulty assumptions about the inmates' interests. One inmate library assistant reports, "they don't come in here asking for gangster books...they call for philosophy, psychology, Bacon and Emerson essays, black history--all history--general equivalency [high school] diploma test books."<sup>46</sup>

The lack of funding, staffing, and books in federal prisons is partially due to the fact that federal penitentiaries' libraries are part of the Bureau of Prisons under the Department of Justice. The state prisons' libraries vary--they are part of the department of corrections, usually, but they are under the education department in some states. Whatever the official designation, the prison library programs are almost always auxiliary to educational programs. Besides the obvious practical reasons for this, the education-as-rehabilitation philosophy of prison libraries is evident.

Less clear are innumerable, intertwined problems derived from the oppression of the current penal system. Security is the center of all correctional institutions and all else revolves on it. In the case of libraries, this means that books often are not allowed to circulate (inmates might send messages in the bindings or use the volumes to exchange drugs) which means that prisoners must read only in the library, which often is open only a few hours a day and equally often does not have a reading room, or receive books from a clerk who delivers and claims them from the cells. (This, in turn, has security problems because the clerk can relay messages and can gain power among inmates because of his relative freedom within the prison walls.) Prisoners who have approved mailing lists may only receive mail from listed individuals who have been checked and approved by the prison officials; therefore, books sent on interlibrary loan often do not reach the inmate since libraries are not on the approved mailing list. And books are definitely, if covertly, censored for inflammatory or destructive material--usually defined by the warden.

The security guards and, especially, the warden's power often result in the library being co-opted as another control over the prisoners. The Wisconsin State Prison at Waupun, for example, states this as "reading is a privilege" on all its library check-out cards and reading lists. But as Coons states, "certainly a library should be a privilege, but that goes along with

a lot of other things; it's an abuse to use the withholding of this privilege as part of a punishment."<sup>47</sup>

Perhaps the problems, and the redeeming points, of prison libraries are best summarized by an ex-offender from Attica who has written an excellent, subjective, and humorous account of his library use there.

One read mechanically, anything that came to hand, with little differentiation: Daphne du Maurier, Harold Robbins, Franz Kafka, Tolstoy, Gibrán, Andrew Shaw... or Playboy... not to mention some gamier fare, if you had the price (usually a pack or two of cigarettes...). One read in this indiscriminating, undifferentiating manner because, like the criminal you'd been pronounced, your main purpose was killing something: Time. When one has to go to a library for a book, a different type of experience is involved. The difference lies in the motivation, which in turn affects the quality of the experience.... [It's a lot of trouble to read on the inside]--one might have to scheme a bit, go to the trouble of applying for cell-study courses or even for transfer to the school, part or full time, as a means of providing himself with a good "cover story" for such unnatural desires as reading.<sup>48</sup>

#### LAW LIBRARIES IN PRISONS

Any mention of laws or litigation providing a legal base for prison libraries has been conspicuously absent--as are the laws. The U.S. Code has no federal law providing for libraries in federal correctional institutions.

Ironically, there has been a series of recent court cases dealing with law libraries in correctional institutions, so there are now legal precedents for legal collections, but not standard collections, in prisons.

The reasoning behind the lack of law libraries in prisons is similar to that behind the inadequate regular library service. Prisoners are expected to accept their guilt and to look to their jailers for help. They are not supposed to upset themselves or the authorities--especially not by voicing complaints about their rights or by composing writs. "Jailhouse lawyers," those convicts who have some understanding of the law and are willing to help other prisoners, were incapacitated and punished until 1969. Law materials in prisons were not declared legal until after that.

To approach the recent rash of developments chronologically, it is wise to begin with *Gideon vs. Wainwright*, 1963, the first of these landmark cases which gained legal access and opportunity for inmates.<sup>49</sup> This case led to the decision that indigent defendants in felony cases must be allowed court-appointed attorneys for their trials. Heretofore, indigent defendants awaiting trial in city or county jails had no access to legal information either from persons or from printed materials. The court decided that "reasonable access to the courts is a constitutional imperative."

In 1969, the Johnson vs. Avery Supreme Court decision stated that states could not outlaw jailhouse lawyers unless they provided "some reasonable alternative" to help indigent and uninformed or illiterate prisoners to prepare post-conviction papers such as writs. The state, thereby, is charged with the responsibility for providing assistance--in the form of professionals or paraprofessionals and/or written materials.

The Gilmore vs. Lynch case extended the above decision and dealt specifically with library materials. Ninety California inmates filed a class action suit against the state. The state of California decided in the prisoner's behalf: all prisoners should have a right to "meaningful" law libraries. The California prison library system's law collections were declared ineffective because of the large number of books lost, stolen, or mutilated over the years.

In 1971, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the California decision in Younger vs. Gilmore. This case considered the right to access to the law library collection independent of access to assistance in writ writing. "Access to the courts" was extended to include not only access to lawyers or knowledgeable inmates, but to legal materials.

There has been much action in response to the above litigation; prison law libraries have become the current issue within the profession. To cite a few representative examples of 1971 activities: the state Correctional Institution at Graterford, Pennsylvania began a paraprofessional law clinic; the American Association of Law Libraries, at the request of the Conference of Concerned Law Librarians, set up a Committee on Legal Services to Prisoners; Chief Justice Burger called for an American Bar Association Commission on Correctional Facilities and Services; the American Correctional Association established a Committee for Provision of Legal Research Materials for Prisons; AHIL established a Special Committee on Library Service to Jails; and West Publishing Company, a major law book publisher, developed a plan for prison law collections. By 1972, the many new committees had compiled booklets of law services to prisoners by state, recommendations for community legal services, and a number of bibliographies. They had also held numerous conferences such as the May 1972 interdisciplinary seminar sponsored by the American Correctional Association and the Institute of Library Research at Berkeley. A Workshop on Legal Research Materials was held in Madison in April 1973 for Wisconsin prison librarians.

In July 1972, ALA's SSRT Task Force on Library Services of California wrote a still unanswered brief on their arguments against the law library plan developed by the state of California. A major complaint is that no provisions were made for reference services or for the training of either prison librarians or inmates in the use of legal materials. No librarians were integrated at the administration level either. Although these complaints were directed to the California Department of Corrections, they are applicable to most of the new plans.

As mentioned above, regular library collections in prisons have no legal *raison d'être*. Litigation such as that for law libraries should be instigated for nonlegal collections. Of course, any such case must be initiated by an

inmate deprived of access to books. It has been suggested that the legal right to books could be developed from the right to education, which is currently considered part of the prisoner's right to treatment.

A case built upon the above logic is exemplified by Lawrence Jolt, et al. vs. Robert Saver, in which the petitioners were inmates. They claimed:

The action of defendants has deprived members of the plaintiff class of rights, privileges, and immunities secured to them by the fourteenth amendment of the U.S. Constitution including a) the right not to be imprisoned without meaningful rehabilitative opportunities...and c) the right to be free from arbitrary and capricious denial of rehabilitative opportunities.<sup>50</sup>

Prison law libraries have become a hot issue, as evidenced by the series of recent court cases and the emergence of new committees to help law libraries and the popularity of this subject in the professional journals. If only nonlaw libraries in prisons received as much attention, perhaps their plight could also be alleviated. Of course, the courts' decisions have given law libraries an urgency which nonlaw libraries do not have.

Meanwhile, the prison law library issue has introduced a new basis for library access to inmates--that of legal right. Libraries are provided not because of humanitarian, religious, or educational motivations, but because of legal necessity.

### BIBLIOTHERAPY IN PRISONS

I believe the basis of library service to prisoners should be changed from legal necessity to rehabilitation. None of the previous theories--punitive, religious, humanitarian, educational, or legal--have realized the enormous powers of literature. As Coons says, "Books can save. That's the point."<sup>47</sup> But the saving aspect of literature in institutions has been restricted to academic and vocational education. All other, equally important, aspects of the rehabilitative nature of literature have been barely mentioned in the literature.

The chapter on library services in the ACA manual states:

The library program, services and materials should be geared to all inmates enabling them to improve their ability to live successfully in these rapidly changing, complex times....In carrying out this function, the library program: 1. provides vocational information 2. enlarges social and reading backgrounds 3. develops reading as a satisfying leisure-time activity, a therapeutic release from strain, and a positive aid in substituting new interests for undesirable attitudes 4. prepares the individual, through his own efforts, for release and post-prison life.<sup>51</sup> (Italics added)



Herman Spector, San Quentin librarian, touches upon the point when he says that reading advisory service in prisons "requires an awareness of reading skills, interests, and attitudes of the men, and the ingenuity to assess possible therapeutic results."<sup>52</sup> He continues later:

The correctional library can contribute directly to the meaningfulness of the overall therapeutic program...it can and does help men in their ultimate adjustment in the free world...frequently men do gain insight into their personal problems through the instrumentality of books.<sup>53</sup>

None of these scanty references to the therapeutic potential of books explains how books can be therapeutic or suggests programs or methods which will make the most of this possibility. Therefore, one must refer to the literature of bibliotherapy, a field which has been defined in terms of a formula--"Good book selection + individual guidance + a definite goal = Bibliotherapy."<sup>54</sup> The official definition is "the use of selected reading materials as therapeutic adjuvants in medicine and psychiatry; also: guidance in the solution of personal problems through directed reading," according to Webster's Third International Dictionary.

Although the term "bibliotherapy" has come into usage only as recently as 1961, when the definition was published, the theory can be traced to the Greeks. The word is taken from the Greek biblion (book) plus oepatteid (healing). The healing process includes the Greek concepts of identification, insight, and catharsis. Russell and Shrodes explain that bibliotherapy is a "process of identifying with another character or group so that feelings are released and the individual develops a greater awareness of his own motivations and rationalizations of behavior...this is a process of dynamic interaction between the personality of the reader and literature."<sup>55</sup>

Often identification with a character or a situation in a book is simpler than identification with another person because the book acts as an impersonal advisor. The book can be trusted when a prison employee cannot. Conversely, the book can serve another function by establishing trust between the librarian and the inmate. Tews says, "Books and related materials are merely used to assist in establishing a means of communication and reinforcing the therapeutic climate for acceptance."<sup>56</sup> The book can be basis of discussion--about the character in the book and through him about the inmate.

This identification of inmate with others (the librarian and the book characters) is essential because of the role dispossession of total institutions such as prisons. When an inmate enters prison, his old identification(s) is taken from him and he is forced to assume another, alien role--that of "criminal." Being labeled a criminal attaches an unavoidable stigma to the person. Schur explains the inevitable change in self-image in convicted drug addicts: "The criminalization of deviance may have an especially crucial influence on the individual's view of himself. Thus the realization that they are considered criminals and--even more significantly--the need to act like criminals causes most drug addicts to develop a pronouncedly antisocial outlook."<sup>57</sup> This new self-image is often incompatible with the inmate's previous view of



himself. Gough believes that in incarceration, "such discipline eventually becomes so manifestly incongruous with the psychopath's own definition of the situation, and so detrimental to his personal preferences, that an immediate goal of escape or avoidance is set up."<sup>58</sup>

Incompatibility of role and self-image creates great role strain, which is increased by the fact that the inmate has no significant others around him. All his "primary others" have been taken away from him--often he is unable to see or communicate with any of the persons who help to constitute his self-image and his other, noncriminal, roles. All evidences of his previous role are removed.

In total institutions...membership automatically disrupts role scheduling, since the inmate's separation from the wider world lasts around the clock and may continue for years. Role dispossession therefore occurs. In many total institutions the privilege of having visitors or visiting away from the establishment is completely withheld...ensuring a deep break with past roles....Although some roles can be re-established by the inmate if and when he returns to the world, it is plain that other losses are irrevocable and may be painfully experienced as such....A legal aspect of this permanent dispossession is found in the concept of "civil death:" prison inmates may face not only a temporary loss of the rights to will money and to write checks, to contest divorce proceedings, and to vote but may have some of these rights permanently abrogated.<sup>59</sup>

To cope with his role loss, the prisoner may withdraw--he may manifest signs of "situational withdrawal" or "prison psychosis" as it is called in psychiatry. Bibliotherapy can help by acting as a bridge "to let the person-ality out and to let the outside world in."<sup>60</sup>

Another common response to role strain is the development of a new role as prisoner which leads to a submergence in the prison subculture. Bibliotherapy can then aid "a conversion, a transference of allegiance from one group to another so that the person is not receptive to criminal behavior patterns."<sup>61</sup> This is done by giving the prisoner people other than fellow prisoners to identify with.

Bibliotherapy can be done individually or in groups of individuals with a common problem. As important as is the right book for the right inmate at the right time, is the subsequent discussion about the reading. It is often only in the talking about what was read that the person gains a full understanding into his reactions to it. The discussion provides a chance for the inmate to test his new ideas and to hear objective comments on them. Group bibliotherapy has an added dimension in that it helps the inmate to realize that there are other real people with problems similar to his.

This paper is not the place to detail further the bibliotherapeutic procedure. The possible results are the essentials in this discussion. Biblio-

therapy claims that books can offer possible solutions to problems, vicarious situations, preparation for the outside, direct and indirect personal relationships, new allegiances, self identity, and increased social sensitivity, besides entertainment, escape, privacy, and relaxation.

One of the problems with providing bibliotherapy in prisons is the current lack of personnel. Bibliotherapy calls for an inter-disciplinary team; the librarian must work with the social worker, teacher, psychiatrist and other professionals aiding the inmate. As C.V. Morrison, a prison psychiatrist, told librarians:

Bibliotherapy will of necessity have to be a cooperative venture. Psychiatrists are trained to observe and interpret emotional reactions, but most of us know little about library science. We can point out the type of material needed but the trained librarian knows where to find it.... Because of the intimate relationship between mental health and social adaptability, every branch of the library can be used to aid the inmate in his adjustment.<sup>62</sup>

There may be some disagreement with Morrison's assumption that the doctor would choose the books, but the general concept is that bibliotherapy requires: "a planned approach whereby a professionally trained librarian works in cooperation with other staff members and designs the library program specifically toward a planned activity for the development of the individual and his ultimate understanding of himself and his ability to function within society."<sup>63</sup>

There are many references to, examples of, and materials for bibliotherapy projects in hospitals. Much less has been done in correctional institutions. The following three programs, however, exemplify the possibilities.

In 1963 the New York Corrections Department asked the Library Extension Division to conduct a bibliotherapy project for young addicts at the New York State Vocational Institution in West Coxsackie. Margaret Hannigan and William Henderson planned and carried out a four-month reading program. Twenty-seven men, who were divided into four groups, volunteered to participate; a rotating collection of books was supplied by the Mid-Hudson library system and the library extension division of the state, and the project began. Each group met with one of the librarians for a fifty-minute period, most of which was spent reading aloud varied materials. Ten to fifteen minutes were spent selecting and checking out books and discussing the materials. The allotted time was not nearly enough, according to both the librarians and the participants, all of whom evaluated the program positively and enthusiastically. As one man said, "Reading helps you get along better with people."<sup>64</sup>

Burt's 1972 conclusions were considerably more sophisticated and scientific. Her doctoral dissertation entitled "Bibliotherapy: Effects of Group Reading and Discussion on Attitudes of Adult Inmates in Two Correctional Institutions" presents a well-controlled and analyzed experiment based on bibliotherapy reading and discussion groups in two Wisconsin prisons--one for men and one for women. The samples were carefully controlled for age, sex, race,

crime, number of months incarcerated, and number of months left to serve. Sixteen people in each of two experimental groups participated in two-hour sessions once a week for twelve weeks. Sixteen people in each of two control groups met one hour three times a week for the same period. All participants were thoroughly pretested on psychological scales of attitudes and beliefs. Six books (fiction and nonfiction) were chosen for their relevancy for the bibliotherapy discussions which were carefully planned. Each session was tape recorded by carefully trained discussion leaders for future analysis.

At the end of the three-month period, careful tests of attitudes and behavior, in addition to self and prison reports, were done and analyzed statistically for each participant. Burt found that the experimental groups registered a much less accepting attitude toward dope addiction and stealing (the only two behavioral attitudes measured) than did the control group. Her results were statistically significant--only the intervening bibliotherapy could account for the difference from pre- to post-test. No difference between experimental and control groups on attitudes toward concepts or persons was found. To summarize, Burt got significant change in behavioral attitudes through bibliotherapy. Although study needs to be done to find out why only behavioral and not conceptual or personal attitudes were changed, her study is certainly a fascinating and valuable one.

A yet-to-be-implemented program is the "Plan for Institutional Library Services in the State of Illinois." This 1968 design includes bibliotherapy as a part of institutional library service based on the following:

One of the important contributions the librarian makes to the rehabilitative process is that he has an opportunity as he works with the resident or patient to listen and to observe. Very often, the communications between him and the patient, the patient's reactions to what he reads or hears provides clues to his development. The opportunity that the librarian has to share these reactions with the therapist very often gives the therapy team an insight into the kind of treatment that should be designed for improvement and growth of the individual.<sup>65</sup>

This plan, then, is aware of the unique position of the librarian in the rehabilitative process. Specific bibliotherapy program suggestions--including purposes, materials, goals, and suggested readings--are given for adult correctional institutions and for groups of delinquent adolescents.

The above three bibliotherapy projects for correctional institutions are extremely significant in that so little creative work is being done in correctional institutions. They demonstrate that bibliotherapy is one means to a truly rehabilitative phase of correctional library theory.

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